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To cite this article: Rebecca Kay & Paulina Trevena (2021) (Not) a good place to stay! – East European migrants' experiences of settlement in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Scotland, Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 47:15, 3492-3510, DOI: [10.1080/1369183X.2021.1886061](https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2021.1886061)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2021.1886061>



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Published online: 16 Feb 2021.



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(Not) a good place to stay! – East European migrants' experiences of settlement in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Scotland

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we ask how migrants establish social relationships, attachments and feelings of belonging within and to disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Drawing on extensive qualitative research with East European migrants in Scotland, we explore empirically the material, relational and temporal aspects of experiences of settlement at the neighbourhood level. We consider the ways in which migrants encounter and assess the material and institutional realities of their neighbourhoods. We examine the social relationships which develop in place, paying attention to social and cultural distancing and mutual 'othering', which may run counter to the development of place-based bonds. We discuss the role of time and the processual and ambiguous nature of settlement. Importantly, in our analysis, we consider the possibility that theoretical frameworks developed specifically for understanding migrant experiences might overemphasise their uniqueness and risk overlooking similarities grounded in multi-scalar hierarchies of power, which cut across lines of ethnic or cultural difference. We draw on wider theories and studies of place-attachment, as well as migration studies theories of embedding and emplacement, to explore the ways in which our participants' experiences may be understood as both similar to and different from more widely shared realities of life in deprived areas.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 10 June 2020
Accepted 1 February 2021

KEYWORDS

Place attachment; experiences of settlement; disadvantaged neighbourhoods; East European migration; Scotland

1. Introduction

In this article, we ask how migrants establish social relationships, attachments and feelings of belonging within and to the places where they live, especially when these places are disadvantaged. We analyse the experiences of East European migrants living in a range of mainly poor, working class neighbourhoods in Scotland. Our participants described these neighbourhoods as 'bad', 'unsafe' or simply 'not very nice', suggesting problematic experiences of settlement and a desire to move on. Interviewees often spoke of 'local' residents in negative terms, engaging in processes of mutual 'othering' which seemed unlikely to be conducive to the development of positive relationships,

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shared local identities or a sense of belonging. Nonetheless, whether by choice or through lack of alternatives, many had stayed in the same neighbourhood for prolonged periods, the majority in our study having stayed for between 5 and 15 years. Deeper engagement with their stories revealed more mixed and ambiguous relationships with local areas and other residents. In an empirically driven analysis, we seek to unpack and explore the ambiguities of our participants' relationships to the neighbourhoods where they lived as material places fulfilling functional needs, but also as social spaces involving sometimes tense relationships with neighbours and residents.

Conceptually, policy makers and scholars have often referred to 'integration' as both a prerequisite for and a measure of successful migrant settlement. However, integration as a concept is also the focus of increasingly prominent critique (Saharso 2019; Schinkel 2018). 'Fixed and narrow' understandings of integration have been shown to be insufficient for explaining migrants' 'nuanced and multifaceted experiences of engagement with people and places' (Ryan 2018, 235). In response, a range of alternative concepts have been proposed, including 'differentiated embedding' (Ryan 2018), and 'emplacement' (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016). These emphasise the processual and uneven ways in which migrants as newcomers become established over time within specific locales, networks and structures. Separately, the concept of place-attachment has been developed by scholars interested in understanding how residents of specific neighbourhoods, whether newcomers or long-established, whether of migrant or 'native' background, 'bond to places' (Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010, 9). In what follows, we bring these until now quite disparate literatures together to analyse our empirical findings, and to explore the extent to which the experiences of our migrant participants are both similar to and distinctive from broader experiences of life in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

2. Theoretical frameworks: embedding, emplacement and place attachment

Migration scholars are increasingly critical of the concept of integration as a means of measuring the success, or otherwise, of migrant settlement. Nonetheless, they remain keenly interested in analysing migrants' experiences of settlement as a long-term, negotiated process involving encounters with institutions and structures, physical and cultural environments, as well as social relationships and emotional attachments (Ryan 2018; Wessendorf and Phillimore 2019). Countering assumptions about an 'ideal-type' majority society into which migrants are expected to integrate, attention has been paid to the 'dynamic, complex, multidimensional and spatially differentiated processes' (Ryan 2018, 235) by which migrants form attachments and become 'differentially embedded' within structures, relationships and places over time. An awareness of the workings and consequences of both new and existing inequalities is crucial to these more nuanced approaches and builds upon previous studies which have asked which 'unit' of the receiving society migrants are expected to integrate into (Castles et al. 2002, 114). Glick Schiller and Çağlar examine the role of inequalities in shaping and defining specific places and the ways in which residents, of both migrant and non-migrant backgrounds, build social relations within them. Using the city as their entry-point they argue for 'a multiscalar analysis of the differential positioning of cities and their residents within globe-spanning networks of unequal economic, political and

cultural power' (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016, 18). This is linked to a 'spatial turn' in migration studies signalling that 'geography matters fundamentally' and requiring attention to be paid to 'different conditions' at 'different scales' (Berg and Sigona 2013, 352). Attention to 'the materiality of place' helps researchers to account for how the 'socio-economic, cultural and physical particularities of the local areas in which [migrants] live and work' (Ryan and Mulholland 2015, 139) impact upon experiences of settlement.

Glick Schiller and Çağlar argue that border crossing is not the only means by which 'displacement' is experienced within 'disempowered cities': dispossession in the guise of unemployment, precarious and part-time employment, loss of social status and downward social mobility affect residents whatever their background or origin (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016, 21). They define emplacement 'as the social processes through which dispossessed individuals build or rebuild networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific city' (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016, 21). This, they contend, is of relevance to migrant newcomers and long-term residents alike. They warn that studies of migrant experiences can overemphasise the uniqueness of migrant trajectories and reify the significance of 'ethno-religious differences' as always 'central in interactions that involve people of migrant and non-migrant background' (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016, 18).

This leads us to explore the ways in which relationships to place have been understood in research where migration and migrants are not the primary object of study. The concept of 'place attachment' shares similarities with discussions of 'embedding' and 'emplacement' in that it encompasses both functional and emotional attachments and seeks to understand the relationship between the two. Functional attachments, or 'place dependency', are created when places fulfil material, economic and educational needs. Emotional attachments, or 'place identity', refer to both the place itself and to the communities which define it (Giuliani 2003). These attachments develop over time and through social relationships and may be linked to self-identity, where people see themselves as similar to others in their neighbourhood, and to self-esteem, where people assess the places they are identified with positively (Uzzell 1996). Thus, both functional and emotional attachments are shaped by the socio-economic, cultural and physical characteristics of neighbourhoods. Inequalities, both within neighbourhoods and in their positioning within broader economic, political and cultural hierarchies, must be accounted for.

Research into place attachment in deprived neighbourhoods has shown that lower levels of place attachment are linked to weaker social networks, feelings of insecurity and lack of personal safety (Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010), a lack of opportunities for social mobility and feelings of being 'trapped' in place (Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010, 418; Bailey, Kearns, and Livingston 2012). Nonetheless, stronger attachments develop over time and especially so where close connections to family and friends provide resources for dealing with problems encountered locally (Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010). In the empirical sections which follow we consider the extent to which our East European participants' experiences reflect these broader frameworks for understanding place attachment in deprived neighbourhoods. Rather than assuming that their identities as migrants are key, we explore empirically the points at which cultural difference and migrant identities come to the fore, and where broader experiences of social and economic disempowerment and displacement are more relevant.

3. East European migration to Scotland and pathways to settlement in disadvantaged neighbourhoods

Following the 2004 enlargement of the European Union, Scotland became a destination for migration from Eastern Europe, especially Poland. This largely economically driven migration has been particular in terms of scale and intensity. East European migrants have come in significant numbers to a wider range of locations within Scotland (and the UK) than previous groups of migrants (McCollum 2013). Indeed, they have come to live and work wherever their labour was in demand, settling in both cities and rural areas, often directed there, at least in the initial period, by employment agencies (McCollum 2013; Trevena, McGhee, and Heath 2013).

This 'new' migration has inspired a growing number of academic studies, mostly focusing on Polish experiences in Scotland's largest cities. Some of this work has specifically explored experiences and practices of settlement both at a more general level, where experiences amongst Poles in Glasgow and Edinburgh act as a proxy for EU post-accession migrants in Scotland as a whole (Piętko-Nykaza and McGhee 2017), and at a very specific local level, for example in social housing contexts within deprived areas of Glasgow (McGhee, Heath, and Trevena 2013). Studies have also explored experiences of 'othering' and complex relationships both within migrant 'communities' (Piętko-Nykaza 2011) and with host communities. The latter being discussed most recently in studies of dominant representations of migration and migrant responses in the context of the UK's EU referendum (Botterill and Hancock 2019; McGhee et al. 2019). In this article, we build on these foundations, going beyond a focus on a single city or a single nationally-defined group of migrants, but retaining a strong focus on the specifics of location. We explore practices and experiences of settlement in terms of their material, emotional and social aspects. We consider encounters and interactions with both institutions and other residents. In doing so, we build up a fuller picture of the ways in which the disadvantaged neighbourhoods where a majority of East European migrants have settled are experienced.

Like many groups of labour migrants from countries with struggling national economies, East European workers have for the most part taken on hard-to-fill vacancies in low-paid sectors of the labour market (Rienzo 2018). Clustering in employment has also contributed to residential clustering in neighbourhoods situated close to places of work and/or where low-cost rental accommodation or social housing is available (McGhee, Heath, and Trevena 2013; Kay and Trevena 2019). In the years immediately following EU enlargement, recruitment agencies and employers often provided accommodation for new arrivals, typically tied to employment (Blake Stevenson 2007, 50). This was usually in low-quality, low-demand rental accommodation, either in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods, or, especially in the case of rural areas, isolated from local residents, for example on farms (Robinson, Reeve, and Casey 2007; Jentsch, de Lima, and MacDonald 2007). Other new arrivals were initially accommodated by family or friends, often in cramped or otherwise constrained circumstances and for a temporary period (Robinson, Reeve, and Casey 2007; Kay and Trevena 2019). For the overwhelming majority of participants in our study, achieving housing stability took time and, for a significant subset, this was enabled through acquiring social housing.

The relative availability and accessibility of social housing sets Scotland apart as a destination within the UK. This was especially true in the years immediately following EU enlargement when, in contrast to England (but not Wales), East European migrants were granted rights to social housing despite the formal limitations of EU transitional arrangements. However, the accommodation offered has often been in low-demand housing in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Rolfe and Metcalf 2009, 63). In these areas, marked by the consequences of economic restructuring, deindustrialisation and outsourcing of labour, widespread issues of long-term unemployment, substance abuse, poor health and petty crime have taken their toll (Riddoch 2013, 17–18). That East European families were willing to accept social housing as long-term lets in these neighbourhoods and were, for the most part, in work and ‘respectable’, was viewed by local authorities and housing associations as a positive development and potentially part of wider regeneration and revitalisation projects (McGhee, Heath, and Trevena 2013, 337). For those renting privately, the only affordable accommodation was often located in similar areas. Thus, many East European migrants have settled longer-term in such disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

4. Methods

This article is based on extensive qualitative research amongst East European migrants in Scotland. 207 qualitative interviews were undertaken between June 2014 and December 2015 in both urban and rural Scotland: Glasgow and Aberdeen cities, two small and one mid-sized town in Angus, one mid-sized town, one small town and several smaller villages and hamlets in Aberdeenshire. During a pilot study in early 2014, the researchers made contact and conducted expert interviews with employers, ESOL teachers, advice services, active members of local migrant organisations and staff at further education colleges in each of the research locations. Participants were subsequently recruited via these gatekeepers, through facilitated visits to ESOL and other classes, places of employment, third sector events and social venues. The group of participants grew through snowballing from initial contacts, as well as advertisements in public places (e.g. ethnic shops, churches, workplaces) and on social media groups to which we were directed to by participants.¹

Most of our study participants had experienced living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods at some point since their arrival in Scotland. For the purposes of this analysis, we selected interviews with participants living in cities and towns (of at least 7,000 inhabitants), excluding those who had settled in villages and hamlets. This subset comprised 176 interviews: 37 from Glasgow, 26 from Aberdeen, 50 from Aberdeenshire, and 63 from Angus. All but two of these participants had been resident in Scotland for at least 12 months and the majority for much longer: 11% of participants had been living in Scotland for over a decade, 59% for 5–10 years, 12% for 3–4 years and 16% for up to 2 years. Most participants (75%) were aged 25–49, 7% were aged 18–24 and 18% were aged 50 or over. 66% of interviewees were female, 34% male. The majority of our participants were from Poland (41%), Latvia (19%), Lithuania (14%), and Hungary (9%). Smaller numbers came from other EU countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia) and non-EU countries (Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Ukraine).

Interviews were conducted in Angus by a bilingual Polish-English speaker; in Glasgow by a bilingual Polish-English speaker and a bilingual Lithuanian-English speaker; in Aberdeen by a bilingual Hungarian-English speaker; in Aberdeenshire by a fluent Russian speaker.² The majority of interviews were carried out in the migrants' native (or second) language. Where participants preferred, or if the researcher could not speak the language of the interviewee, interviews were conducted in English. Where interviews were conducted in English, citations in the text are verbatim and reflect the differing levels of fluency amongst participants. Citations from interviews conducted in the native language of the interviewee have been translated to retain the fluency of the participants' speech in their native language. All interviews were fully transcribed and translated into English before coding in NVivo.

A coding framework was developed using a mix of deductive codes drawn from our original research questions around emotional and material (in)securities and experiences of migration and settlement, and more inductive codes developed from the interview materials and relating to neighbourhoods, networks and sociality. In developing the arguments presented here, we revisited and analysed in detail codes related to: participants' place of residence and their perceptions of it, including contextual nodes relating to access to and availability of social housing, and rental accommodation; migrant perceptions of neighbourhoods, of local residents and of services; as well as more conceptual nodes relating to place, composition of informal networks, connectedness, and feeling (in)secure.

5. Encountering neighbourhoods: material and institutional realities

In Scotland's larger cities migrants have clustered, both historically and during the recent period of East European migration, in neighbourhoods formally designated as suffering from multiple indicators of social deprivation, for example, Govan and Tollcross in Glasgow, and Torry and Tillydrone in Aberdeen.³ However, the neighbourhoods which we discuss in this article, and which our participants described as 'bad' or 'unsafe', were located in both large cities and smaller towns. They varied in terms of their previous histories of immigration, housing stock, proximity to transport links, amenities and places of employment. Differences in the quality and characteristics of the physical environment often depended on whether and to what extent a neighbourhood had at some point become an 'area of regeneration'. For the most part housing was old and of poor quality; however, in some areas this was interspersed with new-builds and modern amenities, such as community centres and swimming pools. Where larger East European populations had become more established, their presence was reflected in a multitude of ethnic shops and other businesses. Despite these variations in the physical and social environment and location of the neighbourhoods studied, they shared common problems linked with poverty, long-term unemployment, poor health, high levels of crime, anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol abuse. In this section, we consider the ways in which our participants encountered their neighbourhoods as material places providing access to employment and housing, for example, but also as the site of institutional structures such as housing associations, police and welfare services. In analysing these encounters and experiences,

we reflect on the parallels with the broader literature on place attachments and particularly their functional aspects.

5.1. Neighbourhoods as places that meet basic material needs

Clustering in low-paid employment and associated housing trajectories were key components in our participants' pathways to settlement in particular neighbourhoods. Whilst for many neither their job nor their housing was ideal, these might nonetheless be positively assessed by comparison with alternatives, either in Scotland or in their countries of origin. For Ruta, the two-bedroom council flat which she and her family had been allocated in a low-demand area in Dundee offset some of the negative features of her neighbourhood. Although she did not think of her neighbourhood as a 'good area', Ruta was nonetheless pleased to have better and more spacious accommodation than had been accessible to her in Lithuania:

It is not a very good area to live, or flat, but when we got it, we were very happy. I know that Scottish people from Dundee, they don't want to go and live in some sort of small houses. If council says that you could, they say no, we'll wait until something better comes up. So, we were very surprised because it has three rooms, two bedrooms, but three rooms. In Lithuania, in the last year we were living in one room with a child. So, it was wow!
(Ruta, Lithuanian, 30 years old, Dundee)

McGhee et al. also found that participants valued the size and quality of social housing, as well as the security of social tenancies, offsetting these against other more negative aspects of deprived neighbourhoods (2013, 332). Our participants, living in a mix of private-rental and social housing, expressed the material needs which their neighbourhoods met in ways which went beyond housing. Indeed, in some cases less than satisfactory housing was accepted as a pay-off against the other advantages of an area. Kati and her husband lived in a small, privately-rented flat in Aberdeen. Kati did not like the flat, although she explained that the low rent and a good relationship with the landlord meant they had stayed for over a year and had no immediate plans to move. Moreover, she pointed out that the neighbourhood provided access to a range of amenities and transport links, as well as the proximity of the city centre and these outweighed its negative reputation:

I feel good here. Naturally, I would like to move after a while, especially to a bigger flat. But now, too, well, for example I go to the local GP. Then there is the bank here. Let's say, we don't like to shop at Spar, but there is a Polish shop. So, I feel like it's a small village, there is everything here ... We shop at Lidl, that's a little further away. But it is so good, that I just walk over the bridge, and then I am in the city centre. I don't feel it, they just say it, that oh, what a neighbourhood! I feel safe here.
(Kati, Hungarian, 43 years old, Aberdeen)

Kati's reference to the neighbourhood as a kind of 'village' was repeated by others as was the fact that local services such as GPs, childcare facilities, or employment centres were nearby and familiar. Although most participants had not actively chosen their neighbourhoods and continued to view them as less than ideal, this meeting of material needs, and the development of familiar routes and routines (Piętko-Nykaza and McGhee 2017, 1423), could produce quite strong place attachments. Whilst both Ruta and Kati contrasted their experiences against those of 'Scottish people', in fact these findings

resonate closely with the wider literature on functional place attachment which shows that for many residents, whether of migrant background or not, bonds to place develop when neighbourhoods meet material needs for employment, affordable housing, basic amenities and transport links (Bailey, Kearns, and Livingston 2012).

5.2. *'Dangerous neighbourhoods': personal safety and institutional responses*

For some participants, the promise of a secure tenancy or larger flat was insufficient to offset negative perceptions of a neighbourhood. These might precede any direct experience of living there. Tadas, for example, refused to take up an offer of social housing because he could not bear to live in the neighbourhood where it was located:

We registered and got it. But when we went there, frankly, I didn't want to get out of the car. There was a group of some kind of addicts standing outside the building. The neighbours didn't look very friendly, so we didn't even leave the car. We refused the flat and I have never asked for council housing again.
(Tadas, Lithuanian, 27 years old, Glasgow)

Those who did take up housing in low-demand neighbourhoods often reported concerns about high rates of crime and feelings of personal insecurity. For several participants, these had translated into actual experiences of verbal and/or physical assault. Lilja suffered a long-term conflict with her neighbour due to which she eventually moved:

A Scottish guy lived below me and he would shout and bawl, throw stones at me. He didn't like something ... he didn't like my kid. He said she walked around too loudly. The police came but they didn't know what to do ... what can you say? ... My daughter still remembers it today. That he threatened to kill us. She still remembers he shouted that.
(Lilja, Latvian, 48 years old, Aberdeenshire)

Like Lilja, a number of our participants felt that neither the police nor local housing authorities had responded adequately to anti-social behaviour, verbal abuse or the threat of physical attacks. Dominika explained that street violence and anti-social behaviour were commonplace in her neighbourhood and that the police were slow or reluctant to respond:

It wasn't the best area, actually. We had some social issues there like people destroyed our wheels in a car or destroyed our windscreen. ... They put stones in our windows, so it was such you know, social situation and police didn't make too much. [*She laughs*] Sometimes they didn't react when we phoned ...
(Dominika, Polish, 40 years old, Dundee)

From a police perspective response times and priorities may well be linked to lack of resource, normalisation of relatively minor incidents and high rates of 'more serious' crime. As such, they highlight some of the wider repercussions of structural inequalities and the different positioning not only of cities, but also of neighbourhoods within global hierarchies of power (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016, 18). These bring with them unequal distributions of resource and uneven capacity of formal institutions to ensure the security and safety of residents. The consequences of this for our participants included feelings of helplessness and abandonment, which may be shared with many local residents, but also of discrimination, which they understood as specifically related to their status as migrants.

Several participants felt strongly that the violence they experienced and the reluctance of authorities to intervene were directly linked to their identification as migrants. Oliwia had suffered what she described as racist abuse from neighbours on her housing estate. She had complained to the housing association but felt they were disinclined to support her, which added to her fear and isolation:

I did complain to the housing association, but ... well, first of all, it looked like they didn't want to get involved too much. Second of all, they were more on the other side because the neighbour complained, for example, [about us] speaking on our mobile phone outside. ... Or parking, because we had friends coming over who parked their cars and the neighbour didn't like it, so she complained. So, then we obviously had visits from people from the housing association. So, then we stopped having friends over. ... I stopped inviting people, [we were becoming] less and less social because I was really scared.

(Oliwia, Polish, 35 years old, Aberdeenshire)

For Oliwia, things improved when her neighbour moved away. As she explained, 'I suffered with depression and stress because of them, but everything just settled when they moved out, so everything's fine now'. For others, the consequences were lasting, particularly in terms of their trust in local authorities and institutions.

Frantizek and Adela, for example, had lived for four years in a housing association flat within a high-rise block. They had experienced various problems and conflicts with neighbours but particularly with a group of youngsters who had thrown stones at Adela in the street and painted swastikas on the walls inside the building. Frantizek had filmed this and sought police intervention, but found himself and his migration status questioned as a result:

I took a camera and filmed them. Then I put it on CD and gave it to the police. And suddenly there was a problem. Do I have Home Office ⁴, do I have a job, where did I get such a camera? I had a problem with the police for having such a device.

(Frantizek, Czech, 55 years old, Glasgow)

As Adela went on to explain, this experience led them to feel distrustful of the police and disinclined to report issues in future:

Later there was some meeting about protecting Glasgow and there were police representatives and we told them that we would never ever again tell anything to the police. We tell them there is a problem, even hand in the DVD with who did it, where and when and then we had problems because of it? Not a chance, we have finished with that. ... When I see anything I just turn away. There are Scottish people to sort this out. I don't get involved any more ...

(Adela, Czech, 48 years old, Glasgow)

Concerns about personal safety, exposure to crime and mistrust of authorities are common experiences amongst residents of deprived or disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Riddoch 2013; Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010). For Oliwia, Adela and Frantizek, however, such experiences were compounded by an awareness that they had been targeted by their neighbours and poorly supported by the authorities precisely because of their status as migrants. As illustrated by Adela's conclusion that it is best in future to leave the reporting of crime to 'Scottish people', these experiences contributed to a strong sense of 'otherness' and of neither belonging to nor being accepted as part of the neighbourhood.

5.3. *Becoming trapped in place*

Participants who felt insecure or threatened in their neighbourhoods often said that they would have preferred to move. Several, including Frantizek and Adela, had moved frequently over a relatively short period. Such moves were often between flats within the same area, or between similarly socially and economically disadvantaged areas. As a result, and in keeping with the findings of wider studies of deprived neighbourhoods (Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010, 18), these participants felt trapped in place, their international mobility as migrants irrelevant, or even an impediment, to their ability to make meaningful moves within the cities or towns where they live.

A flip side to the more positive functional place attachments described above was that housing and jobs often tied participants to neighbourhoods which they would have preferred to leave. Such binding attachments were often multidimensional as jobs and housing were intertwined with social relationships. In some cases these were relationships which migrants had 'brought with them' as networks of family and friends moved either simultaneously or as part of a chain to take up work and housing in the same location (Piętka-Nykaza 2011, 136). In others, they were relationships that had developed within these material contexts with co-ethnics, other migrants, and Scottish work colleagues and neighbours.

The multidimensionality of these attachments resonates closely with migration studies literatures on embedding (Ryan 2018, 235) and the networks of connection, both material and emotional, which underpin theories of emplacement (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016, 21). Our findings support a view of migrant settlement processes as complicated, disrupted and contradictory rather than representing a linear progression from temporariness to permanence (Griffiths, Rogers, and Anderson 2013, 17). We show that the mismatch between intentions and realities regarding length of stay which has more often been studied at a national level (Piętka-Nykaza and McGhee 2017), occurs at this neighbourhood level also. Going beyond the migration studies literature, our findings also demonstrate close parallels with the literature on place-attachment in deprived areas where networks of family and friends offer resources to deal with problems and facilitate a stronger sense of attachment over time (Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010, 418), but where both material and emotional ties can result in feelings of being trapped in place (Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010, 418; Bailey, Kearns, and Livingston 2012).

On the one hand, our findings in this section suggest that many of our participants' experiences are not unique to migrants. Rather, they are linked to wider material realities of relatively impoverished and marginalised places and a lack of socio-economic resource within households, which gives them limited power to change their place of residence. Negative experiences are certainly exacerbated for migrants as newcomers by their unfamiliarity with the neighbourhood, language barriers and lack of strong support networks though these aspects may diminish over time. On the other hand, racism and xenophobia also play their part. Our participants had negative experiences with both other residents and local institutions, based precisely on their position not only as newcomers, but specifically as 'racialised' others (Fox, Moroşanu, and Szilassy 2012). In our next section, we explore the ways in which this emphasis on 'difference' as both an externally imposed identity and a claimed source of self-identification, shapes social relations within neighbourhoods, through processes of mutual 'othering'.

6. Social relations in place: defining 'us' and 'them'

For many of our participants, negative experiences and encounters within their neighbourhoods were explained precisely through differentiating themselves from other residents. Our participants often described their Scottish neighbours as welfare dependents, drug-addicts or alcoholics. Katarzyna had lived in social housing estates in two areas of Aberdeen over a period of eight years, staying on with her two children following her husband's untimely death. Whilst she assessed her current neighbourhood as slightly better than the previous one, she explained that issues of social deprivation and problems with neighbours were similar:

It is really sad but every housing estate where you have got ... when they put people from, who need social care and who get social housing ... we migrants are happy and we take care of the flats and everything. And we treat our surroundings with respect. But those people are spoiled by the Scottish social system. They don't care.
(Katarzyna, Polish, 40 years old, Aberdeen)

Shared histories of inequality and exclusion that shape deprived neighbourhoods and the practices and behaviours of their long-term residents are elided here. Instead, Katarzyna emphasised the poor work ethic and lack of individual responsibility which she, like many of our participants, perceived as prevailing amongst her Scottish neighbours. Lidia had been living in Glasgow for eight years. She too blamed high rates of worklessness in her neighbourhood on what she perceived as an 'over generous' welfare system which had 'spoiled people':

Do you know that there are very few people who actually work? And that's how it is ... They sit ... Everything comes easy to them and it goes away easily as well. ... They don't go to work, they don't have to care about this, because they have all those benefits.
(Lidia, Polish, 29 years old, Glasgow)

Like many of our participants, Lidia and Katarzyna emphasised the 'otherness' of their Scottish neighbours describing themselves and East European migrants in general as culturally distant from such 'local' patterns of behaviour. Migrants, they claimed, were reliable tenants and good local citizens with very different attitudes towards their homes and the physical environment from those of the 'good-for-nothing locals'. Such narratives resonate closely with wider discourses concerning the undeservingness of the poor and unemployed, which come together in East European migrant narratives through an 'unexpected dovetailing' between 'post-socialist subjectivities' and 'the neo-liberal project' of the host country (Matejskova 2013, 984). They also reveal a defensive bounding of identities and a claim to belong to 'communities of value' through highlighting the 'failed citizenship' of internal 'others' (Anderson 2013), in this case poor and unemployed Scottish neighbours.

Such inversion and redirection of 'mainstream stereotypical representations of migrants ... towards the ethnic majority population' has been noted by McGhee, Moreh, and Vlachantoni (2019, 1118) in their study of Polish narratives of earned citizenship in response to the UK's EU referendum, and in an earlier study of Polish migrants living in deprived neighbourhoods in Glasgow (McGhee, Heath, and Trevena 2013). In the 2019 study such narratives were developed against the dominant political and media discourses surrounding the referendum campaign and are not

discussed in relation to actual encounters or experiences of living alongside such ‘failed citizens’. In the 2013 study, lived experiences were differentiated from more negative characterisations as the authors emphasise their participants’ experiences of their neighbours as friendly, welcoming and helpful, more likely to see Polish residents as contributing positively to the area than as competing for jobs and housing (2013, 335). Perhaps such positive experiences were linked to the focus on shared social housing contexts in that study where housing providers and local authorities were at pains to promote good community relations through ‘integration parties’ and positive information campaigns (2013, 337–338).

In our study, where participants were living in a mix of social housing and private rental accommodation, many also had direct experience of negative behaviours or attitudes from neighbours articulated explicitly in terms of a dislike of ‘foreigners’ or ‘migrants’. Boleslav had been living in Glasgow for nine years and liked the amenities and infrastructure of his neighbourhood. Nonetheless, he had applied to change his housing association flat, because:

Where I’m living the Scottish are not really friendly. They have a kind of, I don’t know how to explain ... They don’t think people from East Europe, you know ... They look at us like we came here and ... I don’t know, do something wrong to be here.
(Boleslav, Slovak, 45 years old, Glasgow)

Anti-migration discourses in the media, political and public debate were often reflected in such day-to-day encounters. Honorata recounted being told both ‘You came over here. You took my job’, and, ‘Since you came to my country, speak my language’ (Honorata, Polish, 29 years old, East Kilbride). Several participants, whether actually Polish or not, told of being called a ‘Polish whore’ or a ‘fucking Pole’ during hostile exchanges with neighbours and felt that their ‘Polishness’ was emphasised as a way of marking out their position as unwanted outsiders (Fox, Moroşanu, and Szilassy 2012). Both in our participants’ descriptions of ‘locals’ and in their experiences of xenophobia being ‘Scottish’ or ‘Polish’ was taken as a marker of difference and applied in ways which lumped together ethnic, linguistic and behavioural markers into homogenous categories of the ‘other’.

Going beyond narratives then, we reveal a foundation for antagonistic interactions based on a strong mutual sense of difference, and processes of ‘othering’ which seem unlikely to be conducive to the development of the ‘networks of connection’ which Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2016, 21) describe as underpinning sociabilities of emplacement. Nor would they seem to provide a basis for the more emotional aspects of place attachment, which draw on both social relations and self-identity as linked to the neighbourhood itself: the development of a place-based ‘us’ (Giuliani 2003; Uzzell 1996). And yet, on closer inspection, for many of our participants, social relations within their neighbourhoods were more complicated and ambiguous. Wessendorf and Phillimore have argued that social relations of varying depth and importance, ranging from fleeting encounters to more enduring associations, with a wide variety of people, contribute to migrant settlement within neighbourhoods over time (Wessendorf and Phillimore 2019). Our participants also engaged with their neighbours and other residents in various ways and to differing degrees.

For several participants, especially those who had experienced strained relationships with neighbours, maintaining social distance was part of a conscious strategy for

managing relationships. Galina and Artjoms had lived for six years on a 'difficult' housing estate. They were sure that their downstairs neighbour had been using, and possibly dealing, cannabis, but described how 'not sticking our noses in' had allowed them to maintain good relationships with their Scottish neighbours more generally:

Artjoms: We stayed there for six years. All the neighbours ... when we left the Scottish people asked why? Why were we leaving? Because with all of them we were ... we weren't friends but friendly. Well, not friendly, but we respected them and they respected us.

Galina: We had normal relations.

(Galina, Latvian, 55 years old, Artjoms, Latvian, 56 years old, Aberdeenshire)

Whilst not amounting to friendship, this non-antagonistic stance had allowed for mutual respect and more positive 'fleeting' encounters (Wessendorf and Phillimore 2018, 8). Whilst perhaps insufficient to engender strong social connections or to change underlying prejudices (Valentine 2008), these 'normal relations' had been important in enabling them to live there reasonably comfortably over a longer period.

The quality of relationships and their importance for a sense of embeddedness varied depending on the context of interactions. Lidia had a negative experience of fleeting encounters in public spaces, alongside much more positive relationships with neighbours in her block of flats. Despite having lived in the same neighbourhood for nine years, she continued to feel unsafe and unnerved by aggressive and sometimes violent behaviour in public:

Sometimes I don't feel safe ... You can often see pathological symptoms here ... Such as alcohol, narcotics and things like that. Fights under influence of those. ... The pathology is on the streets. ... You can see it, through the way people behave, the way they treat each other, the way they talk with each other.

On the other hand, she had built up good relations with some of her neighbours, which, whilst still not close friendships, were enough to make her feel 'at home':

There are neighbours downstairs: Scottish and Polish people. It's OK. We often go out and sit down to have a chat. Generally, I will say this, what I have is enough. I don't look for contact with people to make friends, because it didn't work out well a few times and I decided that it's not worth trying all the time. ... But generally, sometimes we drink a bit with the neighbours, we make a barbecue, we bake potatoes, sausages or blood sausage. We sit down, drink a beer and it's fun. It feels like home.
(Lidia, Polish, 29 years old, Glasgow)

Social relationships and interactions within neighbourhoods therefore ranged from open antagonism, through strategies of maintaining social distance, to mixed experiences, some of which included closer and more positive relationships. At the more positive end of the scale, respectful, friendly relationships and opportunities to socialise engendered a greater degree of comfort and might facilitate longer stays. Yet even those who recounted instances of feeling 'at home', had not necessarily developed the strong 'place identities' described in the literature on place attachment (Giuliani 2003). In our final section, we explore the role of time and its ambiguous potential to facilitate such stronger attachments to and identifications with neighbourhoods.

7. Developing attachments over time

We have noted already some of the ambiguities of settlement processes and that for many of our participants, staying longer-term in their deprived neighbourhoods had been neither an original intention, nor a singular decision-making ‘event’ (Griffiths, Rogers, and Anderson 2013, 16). Nonetheless, time had an important, if also ambiguous, role to play in the development of place-based identities and attachments. For some of our participants who had stayed in the same neighbourhood for longer periods of time, distinctions between ‘us’ and ‘them’ had become more blurred. Kornelia had been living in the same area for more than eight years and despite having had many misgivings about the neighbourhood when they first arrived, described herself and her family as ‘at home’ there now. She expressed this in terms of functional and institutional attachments to her workplace and church, as well as strong personal relationships which had formed over time. Initial experiences of ‘getting used’ to living there and trying to ‘blend in’ had grown into a sense of being well-established and a more confident assertion that this was her place. She recognised its good and bad sides but would not want to move even ‘a few stops by underground’ away:

It’s very near to my workplace, near to the underground, near to the church, two stops and we’re there. And this is important. (...) And close to friends. We live here together so if we changed this flat and it would be a few stops by underground that would be difficult as well. So, you have to balance it out somehow so that ... yes. Nothing is ever completely ideal.
(Kornelia, Polish 57 years, Glasgow)

Another participant, Donata, had lived in the same neighbourhood for nine years with her husband and two children. Like Kornelia, she had become increasingly firmly established over time and confident in her ability to navigate institutions, relationships and social situations.

Now I don’t have any reservations regarding this area because I have children and (...) the school is not far and I’m really pleased with the school. You simply have to accept the fact there are different people around. There are in fact a lot of nice people here with very friendly attitudes and there are those who are ignorant, ... that you can tell right away judging by their facial expression and attitude they can’t stand the company of foreigners.
(Donata, Polish, 35 years old, Glasgow)

Both Donata and Kornelia had found ways to ‘build networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific [neighbourhood]’ (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016, 21). Both women were aware of the negative sides of their neighbourhoods, but they expressed increasingly strong functional and emotional attachments which had developed over time. Indeed, it might be argued that they were developing ‘place identities’ referring both to the neighbourhood itself and to the communities which define it (Giuliani 2003), seeing themselves as (at least in some ways) similar to (at least some) others in their neighbourhood.

However, not everyone saw increased attachment to and connections within a neighbourhood as desirable. Imagined futures, both those hoped for and those feared and unwanted, are an important part of migrant assessments of their present situation and feed into intentions, if not necessarily specific or immediately realisable decisions regarding settlement (Griffiths, Rogers, and Anderson 2013, 15). Several participants were

fearful of the consequences for themselves or, often more significantly, for their children of staying in a disadvantaged neighbourhood for too long. Iona did not have children to worry about; nonetheless she was concerned that the social environment on her council housing estate would prevent her from developing her full potential. She wished to move away so she could, as she put it, 'complete' herself:

I'm surrounded by people in benefits, you know? [*She laughs*] There are not troubles, but it's just I'd like to, you know, be somewhere like ... where I could complete myself, you know? ... It's not that I am scared or anything, but you know, it's just ... they are not that good behaving.

(Ioana, Bulgarian, 37 years old, Aberdeenshire)

Similar concerns regarding limited opportunities for social mobility and self-improvement, as well as fears about potential negative impacts on young people, are found in wider studies of deprived neighbourhoods (Atkinson and Kintrea 2001). For many residents, of both migrant and non-migrant backgrounds, this is linked to feelings of being 'trapped in place' both geographically and socio-economically (Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010, 418; Bailey, Kearns, and Livingston 2012). Yet rather than evoking a sense of solidarity or similarity with other residents, for our participants a wish to leave was more often associated with a desire to maintain social and cultural difference. In this sense our participants preferred not to integrate 'too much' within these neighbourhoods where they feared the outcome of negative assimilation into 'impoverished groups at the bottom of the ... economic hourglass' (Portes and Zhou 1993, 85).

8. Conclusions: the same, yet different

At the start of this article, we noted the importance of taking more careful account of socio-spatial inequalities, both new and pre-existing, as well as the socio-economic, physical and cultural realities of place, in order to understand migrant experiences of settlement. We also considered the possibility that theoretical frameworks developed specifically for understanding migrant experiences might overemphasise the uniqueness of migrant trajectories. Whilst useful in querying overly simplistic understandings of integration, theories of embedding or emplacement may risk overlooking similarities grounded in multi-scalar hierarchies of power, which position neighbourhoods and their residents in particular ways and which cut across lines of ethnic or cultural difference. In our analysis, therefore, we have also drawn on wider theories and studies of place-attachment in deprived areas. Employing these combined frames to analyse our empirical findings, we explored East European migrants' experiences of settlement in disadvantaged neighbourhoods drawing attention to the ways in which these may be understood as both similar to and different from more widely shared experiences of life in deprived areas.

Many of the experiences which our participants discussed were shaped first and foremost by the material realities and socio-economic positioning of their neighbourhoods. Functional place attachments linked to the availability of jobs and housing produced some positive assessments but were also associated with a relative lack of choice over which neighbourhood to live in and barriers to geographic and socio-economic mobility. These experiences are similar to those of other low-income households (Atkinson and Kintrea 2001; Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010) and confirm a view of neighbourhood

experiences as grounded in differential access to resource and status rather than ethnic, national or cultural differences (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016, 24). As newcomers, our participants explained how they had struggled to balance the positive and negative aspects of their neighbourhoods and perceptions of danger, crime and anti-social behaviour had been particularly off-putting.

Exposure to higher rates of crime and concern about issues of personal safety are also part of a more generalised experience of life in deprived neighbourhoods (Riddoch 2013, 17–18; Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010, 418). Nonetheless, several of our participants had been specifically targeted by other local residents because of their migrant identities and had not always been able to count on authorities and institutions, such as the police or housing associations, to protect them. Not surprisingly, experiences of racism and xenophobia led them to emphasise a sense of difference and ‘otherness’. Partly in response to such negative experiences and hostile attitudes from other residents and local institutions, but also simply as a broader reaction to the low socio-economic status of and different social attitudes within their neighbourhoods, many participants deliberately distanced themselves socially and culturally from their Scottish neighbours.

Theories of place-attachment, emplacement and embedding all indicate the connections between functional or structural, and emotional or social aspects of life within neighbourhoods. Close social connections, networks of support and assistance, a range of relationships and encounters facilitate access to resources and formal institutions as well as encouraging the development of place-based identities or feelings of belonging (Livingston, Bailey, and Kearns 2010; Wessendorf and Phillimore 2019; Ryan 2018). Mutually antagonistic relations, othering and strategies for maintaining social distance are clearly an impediment to the development of such closer connections and, perhaps particularly, to emotional attachments to place. Nonetheless, our participants also offered examples of more neutral and/or positive relationships and encounters, and these helped to facilitate longer stays. For some of our participants, particularly those who had lived in the same neighbourhood for longer periods, the emphasis on difference did appear to diminish over time. Neighbourhoods became familiar and accepted, with both their positives and negatives acknowledged. However, this was not always the case: some participants feared and rejected precisely such acceptance of and closer identification with their neighbourhoods and the communities which define them.

In conclusion, our findings suggest that migrants’ experiences of life in disadvantaged neighbourhoods have much in common with those of other residents, particularly with regard to issues of social and economic disempowerment and ‘displacement’ (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016, 21). However, mutual ‘othering’ and an emphasis on difference are likely to work against the development of place-based identities and solidarities and raise an additional set of challenges for migrant newcomers. A more advanced research agenda is required for studying migrant and non-migrant lives and experiences in tandem, paying close attention to the material, social and cultural realities of place and the inequalities which neighbourhoods encapsulate and encounter.

Notes

1. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Glasgow, College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee for both the Pilot study (approval ref: CSS/400130068) and the main

fieldwork (approval ref: CSS/400130201). All participants received detailed information on the study in writing and gave consent to participate on signed consent forms.

2. Many of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian participants living in Aberdeenshire are native Russian speakers.
3. These neighbourhoods are formally identified as areas of poverty and inequality using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD): <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD>. They are among the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland, with parts of Govan and Tollcross among the 5% most deprived (https://simd.scot/2016/#/simd2016_10pc/BTTTTT/12/-2.1405/57.1608/)
4. Frantizek is referring to the Worker Registration Scheme which operated between May 2004 and April 2011. All A8 migrants who had taken up employment in the UK of one month or longer during that period were required to register under the scheme.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to our colleagues in the SSAMIS project team: Moya Flynn (University of Glasgow); Sergei Shubin, Holly Porteous and Claire Needler (Swansea University). Also, to Gintare Venzlauskaitė for assistance with the Glasgow fieldwork and interviewing in Lithuanian.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (November 2013–November 2018, ESRC ref: ES/J007374/1).

Data availability statement

The underlying data is available from the UK data archive <http://doi.org/10.5255/UKDA-SN-852584>. For further information on the project see www.glasgow.ac.uk/research/az/gramnet/research/ssamis.

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